



Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton*: A Lyotardian Study

LE CHATTERTON DE PETER ACKROYD: UNE ETUDE LYOTARDIENNE

Noorbakhsh Hooti^{1,*}; Zahra Tahmasbi²

¹Assistant professor, Razi University, Faculty of Arts, English Department, Kermanshah, Iran

²MA, English Literature, Arak Azad University, English Department, Arak, Iran

E-mail: z.tmsb@yahoo.com

*Corresponding author.

Address: Assistant professor, Razi University, Faculty of Arts, English Department, Kermanshah, Iran

Email: nhooti@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to scrutinize the Lyotardian concept of metanarrative in Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton*. Metanarrative seeks to legitimize itself as the only ideology showing the way of Truth, neglects the other narratives, and functions violently to suppress and control the individual subject disregarding individual or cultural differences. Ironically while attempting to give the solution for the human problems and bringing emancipation and salvation through its one dimensional ideology; grand narrative neglects excluded beliefs and ideologies by imposing a false sense of totality and universality. Ultimately the study displays that the only way to get away from the autocratic shackles of the fossilized and frozen mono-centric notions is to resist against them, and we all must learn to respect each and every micro-narrative, which is the silenced and suppressed voice of people of different religious, cultural and socio-political strata.

Key words: Lyotard; Metanarrative; Mico-narrative; Chatterton; Strata

Résumé

Cette étude est une tentative de scruter le concept du métarécit lyotardienne de Chatterton Peter Ackroyd. Métarécit cherche à se légitimer comme la seule idéologie de montrer la voie de la Vérité, néglige les autres récits,

et les fonctions violemment à réprimer et contrôler le sujet individuel sans tenir compte des différences individuelles ou culturelles. Ironiquement tout en essayant de donner la solution pour les problèmes humains et apporter l'émancipation et le salut grâce à ses dimensions une idéologie; grand récit néglige les croyances et les idéologies exclus en imposant un faux sentiment de totalité et d'universalité. Finalement l'étude affiche que la seule façon de sortir du carcan autocratique du fossilisés et congelés mono-centrique notions est de résister à leur encontre, et nous devons tous apprendre à respecter chaque micro-récit, qui est le silence et réprimé la voix des gens de différentes couches religieuses, culturelles et socio-politique.

Mots clés: Lyotard; Métarécit; Micro-récit; Chatterton; les strates

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main worries of the postmodern individual is how to free the world from the bloody claws of the superpowers who feed themselves through the lucrative inherited ideological frames called metanarratives. These unquenchable superpowers do anything to preserve these frames. They can easily take lives; it can be the life of an innocent smiling child or the life of a protesting youngster or the life of an old man/woman who watches the suffering of the helpless angry young generation. The postmodern individual does not seem to be scared of losing his life since he has hardly enjoyed living his life as a decision making social animal. He does not want to be the slave of some centralized figures who have taken

for granted that they can think and decide better than the common people. He knows that resisting against these metanarratives may lead to floods of blood but still he goes ahead and yells his voice aloud courageously.

Lyotard by introducing micro-narrative and inviting the world to stand against the long lived cemented metanarratives has brought a revolution in the mentality of the 20th and 21st century generations. As Hooti and Azizpour(2010, p. 16) assert,

The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has articulated postmodernism within the aesthetic and political spheres. Lyotard's postmodernism critiques the totalizing tendency of modernity's monolithic world-views. Where there is completion and unity in modernism, one finds deferment and fragmentation in postmodernism. Lyotard's major contribution toward a definition of postmodernism is his theory of metanarratives. Modernity, according to Lyotard, privileges all-encompassing narratives such as fascism, Marxism and capitalism. Lyotard's postmodernism encourages little narratives that claim to avoid totalization and preserve heterogeneity. Lyotard's challenge to the tendency to conceptualize history as events in a linear sequence means that, for him, postmodernism can never be represented in language or in history. Postmodernism for Lyotard is neither a style nor an historical period. Instead, postmodernism is an unrepresentable deferment of conceptualization and totality. Given the emphasis that postmodernists place on anti-foundationism and epistemological uncertainty, one can conclude that postmodernism is not easily discernible. It is defined by the use to which it is put within diverse contexts and in the employ of its various exponents.

Malpas (2005) gives the following interpretation of metanarrative:

As the term implies (the pre-fix, 'meta' denotes something of a higher order—so, for example, in linguistics a metalanguage is a language used to describe the workings of another language), a meta-narrative sets out the rules of narratives and language games. This means that the metanarrative organizes language games, and determines the success or failure of each statement or language 'move' that takes place in them. (24)

1. CHATTERTON

Chatterton is set in three different centuries; in modern London, Charles Wychwood, a young poet, saw a picture depicting a middle-aged Chatterton on his death bed. He receives some documents and diaries supposedly written by Chatterton. The memoirs say that Chatterton is not a poet who died young and glorious, but a hack who continued a sordid trade with his partner. Charles Wychwood deduces that Chatterton faked a suicide in order to further his "ghostwriting" career. An elderly novelist, Harriet Scrope steals her plot from old and obsolete novels. She "borrows" Wychwood's research on the topic. Meanwhile, in 1856, the artist Henry Wallis paints a picture of Chatterton on his deathbed and his model is George Meredith the novelist then an unknown person. He strives to depict a realistic picture of Chatterton but ironically, his scene is not a real but a constructed view. Wallis and Meredith discuss whether this image

will eventually be considered the true Chatterton or not. Another part of the novel takes place in 18th century in which Ackroyd depicts from Britain's literary past another poet, Chatterton. He dies at the age of seventeen, but he did not commit suicide, his death was merely an accident, it takes place as a result of an overdose of arsenic, taken to cure a venereal disease.

The assumed authentic biography of Chatterton says that when a prospective patron died, he found himself poor and without future and committed suicide by arsenic at eighteen. There are different versions of Chatterton's biography. These biographies are full of contradictions so no one proved to be true yet no one seemed to be false.

Chatterton, it is analyzed in terms of its metanarrative and metafictional elements and how they are used by the author subversively. Ackroyd uses pastiche, irony and parody in a subversive way, he offers alternative histories, challenges the boundary between story and history in order to destabilize realistic representation and cast doubt on any possibility of absolute authenticity.

Chatterton is a parody of historical writing. Linda Hutcheon calls these kinds of novels "Historical Metafiction" (2002, p. 52). *Chatterton* is a historical metafiction, it highlights the fictionality of history. Ackroyd exploits parody in order to scorn the authority of History; it is his most important device in subverting its credibility. Ackroyd deviates from the biographical account of Chatterton which is written on the first page of the novel and gives different version of the same events, by this way he pokes fun at the verisimilitude of any historical and documentary account.

Our interpretation of the world is not mediated only by our imagination or sensation as romantic poets claim to be, it is highly affected by our cultural and textual knowledge of the world. Ackroyd problematizes the assumed control and authority of romantic poets over the language and text like the authority of God as a creator. The postmodernists have turned their attention from assumed superiority of human agent over language; "they show that the human self does not exist prior to language, but is actually subjected to it rather than controlling language, language itself tends to control us" (Hänninen, 1997, p. 29).

Throughout the novel, we can see the power of language in forming self, public; writers and poets gain their very identity from text and language and the entire public see the reality of the golem through the newspaper's scoops.

Ackroyd shows incompatibility between intention of the speaker and the meaning inferred from the language in order to show distrust in language and its capability to represent the true ideas of the speaker. Throughout the novel we can see mismatch between outside world/the objects/signified and language/the signifier, so the relation between idea/object and language is inconsistent and

conventional nots and inherent.

The concept of originality is destabilized in Ackroyd's novels. Originality is not such a thing, as Romantic Movement believed to be, everything could be at the same time original as well as a copy and an imitation.

In *Chatterton* introducing the idiot boy refers to the metanarrative of Enlightenment with its emphasis on reason and human mind. The idiot child, who stands for human being in the enlightened age, is abandoned by his parents. The idiot boy is a macro cephalic with big head. Head is the place of reason and this bigness of head and weakness of body is at the same time the symbol of great reason and great ambition, while ironically he is an idiot.

2. TRACING SUBVERSIONS OF METANARRATIVES IN *CHATTERTON*

2.1 Reality, Language, Representation

Reality is a structure; it is given it is constructed. Language works independently from the world so we live in a virtual world "always already divorced from the real" (Nicol, 2009, p. 7). Saussure believes that "words gain meanings in relation with other words in a sentence, not because of their relation to the real object they refer to" (Habib, 2005, p. 594).

Harriet Scroop renames everything in her surroundings, and refers to the streets with the names she herself has given to them:

She had renamed all the familiar streets around her, and now it was through The Valley of Bones, Tarts' Paradise and The Boulevard of Broken Dreams that she made her way. When she entered The Valley of Bones (so named because of the gleaming white facades of the Georgian mansions there), she began to brood upon her inconclusive conversation with Mary. (Ackroyd, 1998, p. 17-henceforth Ackroyd)

Her pet is a parrot and all throughout the novel you mistake it with a cat until the last pages of the novel; "And Mummy had a cat, too! What a coincidence! Well, it was a parrot actually. But Mummy used to call it her green cat. It was a great hoot" (Ackroyd, p. 124).

Mr Joynson misuses female and male adjectives and pronouns; "There were some iron railings in front of Mr. Joynson's house, from one of which hung a hand-painted sign, 'Beware of the Bitch, she bites'" (Ackroyd, p. 31). Mr. Joynson calls himself a bitch and referring to males as she and females as he; "I'm not Mr Joynson! I told you, she's not here." (ibid)

These misuses sometimes make conversation difficult for Charles who has come to gain information about the man in the painting; "Yes. The man in the painting. Oh, her. He giggled. She's probably just a female relative. I just want to see if there are any papers connected with her. Him. It's important to me, Pat" (Ackroyd, p. 32).

Poststructuralists and structuralists are influenced so much by the notion of language introduced by Saussure.

They look at language as a system of difference, in which every word gains its significance because it differs from the other words. A pen gains its meaning because it differs with a pencil, so it does not have inherent meaning and its meaning is received in relation to the system.

2.2 Poet-Prophet

Ackroyd shatters any illusion of divineness attributed to art and artist in romantic era. He Challenges any altruistic motivation for making a piece of art. An artist as a human being is mortal and sets out on a fruitless journey to seek immortality through art. Ackroyd seeks to challenge the notion of art as immortalizing device. Whenever Edward encounters with a piece of art, he smells death.

Indeed mostly whatever an individual does, he expects to gain something out of it, so most of the relationships are calculative, that is why Phillip never trusted Harriet and her motivation. He distrusted the exaggerations existed in Harriet's behavior. "Phillip looked on as she embraced Vivien for a few seconds longer than was strictly necessary. There is something wrong here, he thought, something strange. I don't trust you" (Ackroyd, p. 113).

Throughout the novel we can see this hypocritical behavior of Harriet Scroop: in the Charles' funeral she is the last to leave the chapel and she has stolen geranium with its roots assuming a mournful expression. She looks down on her nose at the poor people; she cannot go by public transport "I'm not in the mood for common people" (Ackroyd, p. 117).

Harriet claims that she has given her life to English Literature and did not get anything in return:

'I've given my life to English literature.' Sarah was still very cool. 'It's a pity, then, that you didn't get anything in return.' Harriet tried, but failed, to look 'hurt'. 'I am supposed to be famous, at least. 'Yes, and I hear they're ready to have you stuffed.' Sarah paused. "Which will be the first time in years. (Ackroyd, p. 21)

Ackroyd simulates famous poets with stuffed (taxidermied) animals: "It's a pity you didn't get anything in return" "I am supposed to be famous, at least." "Yes I see they are ready to make you stuffed" (ibid). Harriet wears a fur and hanging a bird's stuffing from her hat. Ackroyd implicitly states that all motivations for composing a piece of art is self-centered, it is neither an oriented nor an altruistic motivation. Artists simply use their art to earn a livelihood.

Most of the times *Chatterton* has a vision of "light". In the novel light is a symbol of fame. *Chatterton* dreams about the time when he is in the spotlight, this indicates his need to be noticed to be the center of attention, while Ackroyd deliberately uses the word "vision" ridiculing the concept of poet-prophet of romantic era: "But *Chatterton* is dazed by torchlight: all bright things remind of his approaching fame, and he can feel the warmth upon his face. I am looking into the flame, and I see everything

before me...” (Ackroyd, p. 136).

Chatterton relates the successes in writing with chance: “Writing is all a lottery” (Ackroyd, p. 54). He writes merely because of resisting from poverty; “I could not bring myself to show my poverty or to accept another’s charity. Instead I sharpened my quill and sat down to write, I must write I need to live. I cannot eat air or grass for my sustenance” (Ackroyd, p. 55). Charles Wychwood’s death takes place after a vision; ironically the vision with its assumed healing power is fatal:

It is a dream of wholeness, and of beauty. All the yearning and all the unhappiness and all the sickness can be taken away by that vision. And the vision is real. I know. I’ve seen it, and I am sick.’ Vivien looked at him in astonishment, because he had never before confessed to the sickness which she could now see clearly upon his face. (Ackroyd, p. 95)

Wordsworth considered his role, as a poet, “the rock of defense for human nature” (Wordsworth, 1997, p. 248). Most of the romantic poets frequently claimed to have mystic/supernatural experiences and felt their work was divinely inspired and that their role as creator/revealer was of great importance and they were sharp social critics. They believed absolutely in the reality and power of the imagination (a term they used with far greater dimensions of meaning than we do today) as the pathway to truth, revelation creation, and restoration.

Ackroyd questions the role of poet as poet-prophet. In *Chatterton* there are lots of hints to the word ‘vision’. “It is a dream of wholeness, and of beauty. All the yearning and all the unhappiness and all the sickness can be taken away by that vision. And the vision is real” (Ackroyd, p. 95). Most of the Romantic poets assume the role of poet-prophet, the concept of the great artist as prophet, for their generation. But actually there is no deliverer from suffering in this disaster ridden world.

Interpretation of the world is not mediated only by our imagination or sensation as romantic poets claim to be, it is highly affected by our cultural and textual knowledge of the world. Ackroyd problematizes the assumed control and authority of romantic poets over the language and text like the authority of god as a creator

Throughout the novel we can see the power of language in forming self, public; writers and poets gain their very identity from text and language, all the public see the reality of the golem through the newspaper’s scoops:

The postmodernist have turned their attention from assumed superiority of human agent over language; they show that the human self does not exist prior to language, but is actually subjected to it rather than controlling language; language itself tends to control us. (Hänninen, 1997, p. 29)

Ackroyd by depicting the scene of Chatterton’s death shows that death by arsenic is not beautiful at all and by this way shatters any romanticized and beautified view about artist and his death:

The salvia fills Chatterton’s mouth, a river overflowing its precious banks. There is a pain in his belly like the colic but

burning so, my liver and spleen might roast in the heat. What is happening to me? He tries to rise from his bed, but the agony throws him down again and he rolls in terror to stare at the wall. Oh god the arsenic. He vomits over the bed, and in that same spasm the shit runs across his thin buttocks-how hot it is- and trickles down his thighs, the smell of it mixing with the rank odour of sweat pouring out of his body. Everything is fleeing from me. I am the house on fire.

Oh god the poison. I am being melted down. (143)

“Lee, Lee, twig from the City tree, which does not grow but springs unnaturally, its roots in consanguinity, its fruit mere fantasy” (Ackroyd, p. 191). It is a mock poem by Chatterton ridiculing the dead Alderman Lee which seeks to undermine the dignity of the dead person.

2.3 Originality

One of the connotations of Originality is creativity, the talent of bringing into the world what has not existed before, which “is estimated highly in an information culture which increasingly sees itself confronted with the difficulty to distinguish between the supposedly true and false, original and fake or reality and simulation” (Heindl, 2009, p. 2). Another description, of originality is unusual approach to things which already exist.

Something which is considered to be Original possesses a higher and superior position and is considered to be superior because it comes first and “everything else can only be secondary - within a temporal frame as well as in terms of value” (ibid), and it is assumed to be pure and authentic because it is closer to the reality:

The relative authority which the concept of origin and artistic originality assumes today in a conventional humanistic interpretation derives from the idea of the beginning, of purity and of authenticity attributed to the original. The myth of the origin as a state of absolute truth and purity is one of the dominant orthodoxies of enlightened epistemology. Implicitly, the original conveys the message of being as close as it gets to reality. Thus, in humanity’s preoccupation with coherence, in its obsession with reality and in its hunt for ‘the real thing’, a privileged position is offered to the assumed original and its creator, as it is, for instance, the authority of the author in the literary field. (ibid)

The shattering of the illusion of originality in Postmodernism corresponds to “deconstructionist analyses of traditional dichotomies and logocentric universals. Deconstructionists see the world as structured by the principle of binary oppositions but these dichotomies are no longer “mutually exclusive: x and not-x” (Ruthven, 2001, p. 64) they are interdependent. Hence differentiation in postmodern era cannot work with assumptions based on exclusive binary oppositions, i.e. ‘either-this-or-that’, instead it focuses on the possibility of inclusion, i.e. ‘this-and-that’

In Ackroyd postmodernist attitude, the notion of forgery and plagiarism is not negative. Ackroyd by using parody and intertextuality and showing the prevalence of forgery among artist seeks to show that the romantic claim of originality is out of question. The character of Thomas

Chatterton (1752-1770) is the symbol of intertextuality and plagiarism itself. In various literary histories, Chatterton has been charged with plagiarism.

Ackroyd seeks to deconstruct the myth of originality by stating that there are “only a limited number of plots in the world” (70) and that “Everything is copied” (93). Vivien, Charles’ wife, works in an art gallery, through which we are introduced to forgers such as Stewart Merk. Saymour is a famous painter and Sadlier, was his dealer for twenty-five years. He is in Merk’s Gallery to sell some of Sadliers last paintings and he states that it was him who painted all of Saymour’s last pictures and all the painting were fake because Saymour was suffering from arthritis in his hand and he could not possibly paint them. He addresses Merk and says that he could claim the same but he must show proof. Ironically, Merk unzips a portfolio and shows a canvas, which proves those fake paintings are painted by Merk himself. By this way Merk and Sadlier come to a kind of agreement rather than ruining their relationship.

Harriet Scrope, is a novelist who steals her plot from old and obsolete novels. She has stolen one of her plots from Harrison Bentley’s novel, *The Last Testament*. Ironically, a biographer of him...reveals that the person under discussion, at the end of his life, is in such a poor health that he is incapable to compose the verses that brought him perpetual reputation; it is the writer’s secretary who has written them for him:

Philip remembered where he had read Harrison Bentley’s *The Last Testament* before: Harriet Scrope had written a novel in which a writer’s secretary is responsible for many of her employer’s ‘posthumous’ publications; she knew his style so well that she was able effortlessly to counterfeit it, and only the assiduous researches of a biographer had uncovered the fakery. This was very close to the late nineteenth-century novel which Philip now held in his hand. He dropped it, and its fall echoed around the basement of the library. (Ackroyd, p. 43)

Harriet Scrope fears to write her memoirs because it will reveal her forgeries. Sarah Tilt a friend of Harriet Scrope is a "famous art critic" (Ackroyd, p. 71), she is writing an essay about representations of death, such as the one in Wallis’ painting. Andrew Flint is also a novelist and a biographer, he is writing a biography about George Meredith. Philip Slack, the librarian, is a friend of Charles’s, who once tried to write a novel but finally abandoned it: because he had written with painful slowness and doubt. He had also a bad feeling about the pages he had managed to complete because it seemed to him that his writing is filled with words and phrases from the work of other writers whom he well-liked.

So borrowing from the other texts and artistic forgery can be seen throughout the novel. Spectral world of language in *Chatterton* is emphasized; this became particularly clear when Philip Slack, Charles’ friend suddenly feels overwhelmed by the amount of textuality surrounding him in the library’s basement. Philip

"dropped... [the book], and its fall echoed in the basement of the library" (Ackroyd, p. 43).

2.4 Rewriting History

Chatterton is a historical metafiction; it highlights the fictionality of history. It exploits parody in order to scorn the authority of History. Parody is imitation with an undermining, ridiculing change; it is Ackroyd’s most important device in subverting credibility of realistic representation and discrediting of canonized ‘truths’, such as totalizing views about history.

Historical metafiction such as *Chatterton* show the attitude of postmodern theory toward history, in historical metafiction “traditional approaches to historiography-historical documents and events-are no longer valid and multiple histories are possible” (Kirca, 2009, p. 16). The presence of historical characters or events in postmodern novels differs from classical historical novels of the nineteenth century. In the traditional historical novel there is no contradiction between historical realms – persons, events, specific objects and so on- introduced in the novel and ‘official’ historical record. Therefore, the “dark areas,” of history are limited only to the places where there are blanks in the official records. When historical figures or events are introduced in fictions, the boundary between the real and the fictional is blurred. Classical historical fiction “avoids anachronism and the contradiction of official history through producing fictional only in ‘the dark areas,’” (16) whereas postmodern fiction, by contrast, self-consciously contradict documented history; “by flaunting anachronism; and by integrating history and the fantastic” (McHale, 1994, p. 90).

Ackroyd deviates from the biographical account of Chatterton which is written on the first page of the novel and gives different version of the same events and by this way he pokes fun at the verisimilitude of any historical and documentary account. This disbelief in ultimate “Truth” reflects postmodern distrust in Grand Narratives. Historical metafiction such as *Chatterton* represents history and narratives of the past events and makes it neither believable nor unbelievable in order to show that there is no historical fact but merely “brute events of the past” (Hutcheon, 2002, p. 57).

There are different versions of Chatterton’s biography and each biography describes a quiet different poet: the original biography of Chatterton written on the first page of Ackroyd’s *Chatterton* depicts a hopeless Chatterton at the age of eighteen who poisoned himself by drinking arsenic in water when his prospective patron died and he found himself penniless and without prospects.

Another version of Chatterton’s biography is that he died at the age of eighteen, but he did not commit suicide, his death was merely an accident “a wrong mixture of opium and arsenic, indeed to cure a venereal disease” (Hänninen, 1997, p. 25). This version of biography narrates rather different story: he is not described as a

depressed penniless poet; instead he was happy and full of energy seeking to improve his health.

This version is discovered by Charles when he saw a picture depicting a middle-aged Chatterton on his death bed. In order to know the true history of Chatterton he searches through some documents and diaries supposedly written by Chatterton. The memoirs say that Chatterton is no longer a poet who died young and glorious, but a hack who continued a sordid trade with his partner. This was the document which Charles Wychwood had carried back with him.

It is released that each biography depict a quite different poet these biographies are full of contradictions so no one seemed to be certain. At first, Charles had been annoyed by these discrepancies but then they exhilarated him: for it meant that, anything became possible. "If there were no truths, everything was true" (Ackroyd, p. 127).

All these different versions mock the official historical record and so raise questions about their validity. Novel's idea about Chatterton's biography remains a possibility: the entire version could be interpreted as an authentic biography of Chatterton:

but they remain a kind of possibility that would hardly be accepted by the conventions of history writing. Thus *Chatterton's* parody is clearly deconstructive: history is shown as no better than fiction, merely one story among many others, and the belief in ultimate Truth collapses, which reflects the postmodern rejection of Metanarratives. (Hänninen, p. 43)

2.6 Metanarrative of Enlightenment in *Chatterton*

In the Enlightenment metanarrative the prerogative position is allocated to human mind and reason in the project of the fulfillment of humanity:

According to recent literature, the crisis of modernity owes much to an uncritical acceptance of the 'Enlightenment metanarrative' The Enlightenment, with its sanctification of reason, privileged technological progress and personal advancement created the illusion that human potential and happiness was unlimited. All one had to do was to free oneself from superstition (for example, religion) and the world would be a better place. Modernity has, correspondingly, emphasized individual rights, personal power, and wealth. In spite of the promise of modernity, however, the wars, famines, poverty, and inequality of the modern world have made it all too obvious that the end result of the Enlightenment's goal to alleviate the miseries of the human condition applies only to a small portion of the population. In this respect, the contradiction between the universality of the Enlightenment project and its application to a minority of the population lies at the heart of many of the critiques of modernity. (Parker, 1996, p. 57)

In *Chatterton* introducing the idiot boy refers to the metanarrative of Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason and human mind. The idiot boy is a macrocephalic with big head. Head is the place of reason and this bigness of head and weakness of body is at the same time symbol of great reason and great ambition, while ironically he is an idiot. The case that he is abandoned by his parents refers to the rejection of past and tradition by modern man

in the enlightened age. Here ironically it is the modern man who is abandoned by his ancestors, so Ackroyd pokes fun at the enlightened man's dismissal of his precedent. Chatterton finds a "doll without a face, the limbs and tors hold together by rusting wire" (132), and it is the place where he sees the idiot boy in rags and tries to save him from the debris of a ruined house that its front has already collapsed:

The face of the child opens and from it emerges a strange high note. To Chatterton it sounds like the call of some animal which has lost its young, and for a moment he is afraid. Come now he says before we are both pressed to death. On a sudden instinct he picks up the doll....(ibid)

The idiot child, who stands for human being in the enlightened age, is like an animal whose responses and motivations are instinctive not intuitional or rational. Chatterton in an attempt to save the idiot boy's life tries to prompt him by showing the doll and instinctively he comes out of his hidden place just to take his doll:

Many postmodernists wish to broaden the basis of human knowledge beyond the intellect. An extreme case was that of Lyotard who, in one his thinking, Championed the libidinous instincts of the human person against rational controls. This is extreme, for sometimes the intellect has to control and even deny the impulse of feeling and desire. But the person who is all intellect is less than fully human. (Long, 2001, p. 14)

The idiot boy in reply just imitates what Chatterton asks him. Chatterton thinks, "Without words there is nothing, there is no real world without words I can not even warn or protect you... without words you are in a different time. You exist in some other place" (Ackroyd, p. 68). Here Ackroyd juxtaposes two words "world" and "words" to emphasize the importance of using words in making different worlds.

There is, then incommensurability between popular narrative pragmatics, which provide immediate legitimation, and the language game known as the question of legitimacy....Narratives...determine criteria of competence and/or illustrate how they are to be applied. They thus define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimized by the simple fact that they do what they do.

Here Chatterton refers to the importance of the role of the language in protecting the child; he is a poet expecting and claiming to have a giant imagination but, "he could not imagine how the boy lived, he had just heard stories of deformed children abandoned by their parents to wonder streets" (Ackroyd, p. 50), so he gains his knowledge from the narratives and stories he had heard. Chatterton even is disgusted to touch the idiot boy because of his filthy skin. He wants to protect him somehow but he thinks it is better to give him arsenic rather than leave him unprotected against this harsh world; it is the solution given by him as a poet, then he leaves the child, makes a promise to come back tomorrow, a promise he never keeps .

Chatterton immediately after meeting the child thinks about composing an elegy, but Chatterton as a poet of "enlightened age" instead of writing an elegy just bursts into laughter. Mr. Chrome says "But you seem take pleasure in it, Mr Chatterton. You see the poetry in it, do you not? There is a smile playing about your face. And indeed, Chatterton burst out laughing" (ibid).

The power of language is emphasised here in order to subvert the authority of the author over text. Chatterton as a poet is a mortal being he fades away from memory "Gradually Chatterton faded from his (Tom) memory, and the street itself was changed, but the idiot boy was always known as Tom" (ibid) but the thing which remains after changing streets-symbol of passing time is the name "Tom" he had given to the child which is also his own name.

CONCLUSION

Postmodernism adopts a systematic disbelief of deeply rooted traditional ideologies and theories. Postmodernism is equivalent to a reaction against an ordered idea about the world and hence against settled notions about the form and meaning of texts.

This study has tried to display how Ackroyd questions the metanarratives and the decentring of the cultural authority. It also shows that the world around us should not be seen as a totalizing sequence but in fragmented episodes.

For postmodernists neither reality nor meaning can ever definitively be hold fast as truth rather every description of reality, any recognition of meaning is always an interpretation and a conditional construction. There can be no one truth, no one and only true narrative, different way to obtain knowledge is possible yet there is no one correct mode of knowledge or way of knowing; there are a variety of opposing discourses that reach truth.

In this novel the legitimacy of history and historiography as informative is questioned thematically as well as structurally. The authenticity of any historical narratives-personal historical narratives such as autobiography and biography- become decidedly unstable. In *Chatterton* there are several different accounts of Thomas Chatterton's death that are presented in different narratives by this way Ackroyd seeks to emphasize the interpretive quality of history.

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